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Photo courtesy of Erin Doherty

Erin Doherty, a Congressional Research Service writer-editor, writes from home during expanded telework.

CRS Serves Congress Virtually During the Pandemic

The Congressional Research Service is continuing its mission largely uninterrupted.

BY ERIN DOHERTY

Although many aspects of day-to-day life have been brought to a halt by the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, the support of the Congressional Research Service (CRS) for Congress has not – quite the opposite. Tasked with providing objective research and analysis to members of Congress and congressional staff, CRS transitioned to an all-virtual environment with a speed and efficiency that has allowed it to continue its work largely uninterrupted.

“While working virtually, CRS staff are handling requests, publishing products, hosting webinars, updating Congress.gov and con-

tinuing the full range of operational responsibilities, including hiring actions and executing the budget,” said Mary Mazanec, CRS’ director.

As part of its efforts to reduce transmission of COVID-19, the Library on March 12 closed its buildings to the public, and on March 16 implemented a program of expanded telework for staff.

Within CRS, administrative staff ensured a quick and smooth transition to organizationwide telework. In just the first week, CRS staff authored 52 new products, published 59 updates and handled numerous confidential consultative requests. By April 17, CRS had written 228 new products

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NOTICES

DONATED TIME

The following employees have satisfied eligibility requirements to receive leave donations from other staff members. Contact Lisa Davis at (202) 707-0033.

Sharif Adenan
Lynette Brown
Eric Clark
Sharron Jones

Terri Harris-Wandix
Adam Rosenberg
Donna Williams

STAFF INNOVATOR APPLICATIONS INVITED

LC Labs and the Library Collections and Services Group (LCGS) are partnering on a pilot initiative to explore a staff innovator program. LCGS staff, including staff in the Law Library and Library Services, are invited to apply for a 120-day detail as a staff innovator. The detailee will design and execute a project that benefits the Library by taking an innovative approach to a Library collection, workflow or service. The detailee will work closely with staff of the Office of the Chief Information Officer and will gain knowledge of iterative practice, context analysis and experimentation.

Apply by May 29: <https://go.usa.gov/xvEAK>

LC Labs is hosting a virtual open house on May 13 from 2 to 3 p.m. to answer questions about the detail and the application process. Call in via locgov.webex.com/meet/jame or +1 (510) 210-8882 using the access code 904 592 889 #. Questions can also be sent to LC-Labs@loc.gov.

The pilot staff innovator program seeks to facilitate collaborative opportunities for staff from across the Library, and LC Labs is interested in speaking with other service units interested in offering this opportunity to their staff members.

Contact Eileen Jakeway of LC Labs at ejakeway@loc.gov.

DIG INTO HISTORICAL ONLINE IMAGES

May 7, 2 pm.

Ben Lee, one of this year's innovators in residence, has written a machine-learning algorithm to extract all the visual content from the over 16 million pages of historical newspapers included in the Chronicling America database. Join him for a virtual "data jam" in which he will share segments of the resulting dataset in advance of its full release later this year. Dig into the visual content, learn about American history and formulate research questions of your own!

Register: <https://bit.ly/2y6Pr9v>

Questions? Contact Eileen Jakeway of LC Labs at ejakeway@loc.gov.

GAZETTE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

loc.gov/staff/gazette

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MISSION OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

The Library's central mission is to engage, inspire and inform Congress and the American people with a universal and enduring source of knowledge and creativity.

ABOUT THE GAZETTE

An official publication of the Library of Congress, The Gazette encourages Library managers and staff to submit articles and photographs of general interest. Submissions will be edited to convey the most necessary information.

Back issues of The Gazette in print are available in the Communications Office, LM 143. Electronic archived issues and a color PDF file of the current issue are available online at loc.gov/staff/gazette.

GAZETTE WELCOMES LETTERS FROM STAFF

Staff members are invited to use the Gazette for lively and thoughtful debate relevant to Library issues. Letters must be signed by the author, whose place of work and telephone extension should be included so we can verify authorship. If a letter calls for management response, an explanation of a policy or actions or clarification of fact, we will ask for management response.—Ed.

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GAZETTE DEADLINES

The deadline for editorial copy for the May 15 Gazette is Wednesday, May 6.

Email editorial copy and letters to the editor to mhartsell@loc.gov and wmal@loc.gov.

To promote events through the Library's online calendar (www.loc.gov/loc/events) and the Gazette Calendar, email event and contact information to calendar@loc.gov by 9 a.m. Monday of the week of publication.

Boxed announcements should be submitted electronically (text files) by 9 a.m. Monday the week of publication to mhartsell@loc.gov and wmal@loc.gov.

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at loc.gov/staff/gazette**

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Any Questions? Virtual Office Hours Offer Teachers Ideas

The Learning and Innovation Office is fine-tuning its outreach during the pandemic.

BY STEPHEN WESSON

The 1918 influenza pandemic killed some 50 million people worldwide, including about 675,000 in the U.S. Dorothy Kitchen O'Neill, an American Red Cross volunteer, was among the gravely sickened. She fell ill while sailing for Europe to help aid efforts there. "I was down for a week and have only been up for two days so feel shaky," she wrote to her family on Oct. 10, 1918.

Her letter was among primary sources Cheryl Lederle of the Library's Learning and Innovation Office (LIO) shared virtually on March 26 with teachers from Colorado, Kansas, Ohio and Virginia. "There are powerful documents that can make this very, very real for you and for your students," Lederle told educators regarding how they might use such Library primary sources to teach about the pandemic.

Library education specialists have been leading online office hours from their homes since March 13, often accompanied by colleagues from other Library divisions. The twice-weekly sessions are among the ways the Learning and Innovation Office has continued to serve the nation's educators during the COVID-19 coronavirus crisis.

"For over two decades, the Library's education team has used a variety of distance learning technologies to provide teachers across the grade spectrum and across the U.S. with Library resources and effective teaching strategies," said Lee Ann Potter, director of LIO. "Now, at a time when educators are facing an unprecedented emergency, we've been able to leverage our tools, partnerships and experience to ramp up quickly with virtual programs and to support them where

ever they may be."

In addition to the online office hours, LIO staff have presented more than a dozen programs for educational audiences since mid-March on topics ranging from introductions to the Library and basic research to scientific literacy and classroom use of Supreme Court cases. Staff have also presented webinars on other Library platforms and as guests of national organizations, including National History Day, the National Council for History Education and the Organization of American Historians. Altogether, they've worked with over 500 live participants, with still more viewing the recorded programs afterward.

The office's resident teachers have also pitched in. Jen Reidel, this year's civics teacher in residence, was featured in a podcast last month titled "One Teacher's Year Inside the World's Largest Library" (<https://bit.ly/3av22Ag>). She and Amara Alexander, LIO's Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator, also presented a session for an online conference in late March about effective use of primary sources in social studies and science, technology, engineering and mathematics education.

As always, teachers across the country also continue to use resources on the Library's portal for educators (www.loc.gov/teachers) — it has been visited more than 600,000 times since March 15 — and to participate in lively discussions on the Teaching with the Library of Congress blog and the



Cheryl Lederle interacts with teachers remotely from her home office.

David Ensign

@TeachingLC Twitter account.

The Library has also been reaching teachers through the work of the Teaching with Primary Sources (TPS) consortium. It's a group of universities, historical societies, foundations, companies and school districts that offer professional development, curricula and programming supporting educational use of primary sources.

Of particular note are the student-focused research modules created with TPS grant funding by Maryland Public Television and Maryland Humanities (<https://bit.ly/3anUShq>) and the games and interactives (<https://go.usa.gov/xvnqs>) created for the Library's Congress, Primary Sources and Civic Participation project.

As one recent online office hour session came to a close, one participant commented, "What an exceptional opportunity to gather information on this remarkable source. Thank you for all the work you continue to do." Said another, "It's a great service. So much is available through LOC!"

Information about upcoming office hours and materials from past sessions: <https://go.usa.gov/xvn3y> ■

Planning Begins to Resume On-Site Operations

The Library has started discussing ways staff might safely return to work once rates of infection from COVID-19 in the Washington, D.C., region begin to subside, reported Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden in an April 23 video address (<https://bit.ly/2KG18Xc>). It was her fifth video address since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Your health and safety are the top priority as we begin these planning efforts,” she assured staff.

For the time being, all plans remain provisional, because it isn’t known how quickly conditions in the region will improve, the Library’s Operations Committee explained last week. For the same reason, no timeline has been established for reopening Library buildings.

That said, the Library anticipates reopening incrementally, taking into account restrictions and health conditions in jurisdictions that affect the Library’s workforce. In the first phase of reopening, a limited number of staff who perform critical work that has been disrupted by the closure of facilities will likely return. Social distancing and other health precautions will remain in effect.

For now, the Library is continuing its policy of maximum telework and restricted building access.

Hayden offered special recognition in her address to a handful of staff members who have continued to work on-site during the pandemic: Maurice Carter, Derrick Coleman and Clarence Carter, stationed at the Madison Building’s loading dock, and James Davis, Anthony Price, John Lockhart and Ernesto Gallo, who support the Library’s Cabin Branch facility.

“They have been ... handling essential tasks during this time,” she said, thanking them on behalf of the Library’s staff for their efforts.

Referencing the Library’s 220th anniversary – April 24 marked the milestone – Hayden told staff, “We

are reminded that our mission to serve all Americans has never been more vital, ... and all of the work that you are doing to make sure that we continue to serve in this new and challenging environment is deeply appreciated.”

She closed with a virtual story time, reading “Goodnight iPad” by Ann Droyd in honor of what would have been Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day.

In other pandemic-related news from last week, the Human Capital Directorate (HCD) made available an interactive frequently-asked-questions document (<https://go.usa.gov/xvE2v>) answering common inquiries from staff working remotely. The document covers time and attendance, payroll, performance management, recruitment, retirement, training, transit and other topics.

HCD also announced a new link and single sign-on (<https://bit.ly/2Yc5L3i>) on the Library’s network to access human resources applications.

As of May 1, three new cases of COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19 have been reported to the Health Services Division (HSD), bringing the total number of staff cases to 30. Of those, 20 staff members have recovered, while 10 still have symptoms or are in quarantine. Because the newly reported cases involve employees who have not been in the Library in over 30 days, contact tracing has not been necessary.

HSD is communicating with all staff members who become ill. In cases in which ill individuals were present in Library buildings, HSD is also notifying their close work contacts and cleaning and disinfecting the areas affected. The same process is being followed when contractors in Library buildings become ill.

Any staff who experience symptoms of COVID-19, are clinically diagnosed or test positive should notify their supervisors. HSD has made guidance about specific steps to take (<https://go.usa.gov/xvETW>) available on the website. ■

DANCING IN THE HALLS



Shawn Miller

Innovator-in-residence Brian Foo displayed his break-dancing skills in the Jefferson Building in February. The photo, by Library photographer Shawn Miller, was published in the New York Times, on the WAMU website and in other outlets last week when the Library previewed the hip-hop music-making project Foo is developing during his residency.



Tiffany Ruefky

Zachary Wilkins

Zachary Wilkins is head of the Service Desk Operations Section in the End User Services Division of the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO).

Tell us a little about your background.

I've lived my whole life in the Washington, D.C., region. I grew up in Calvert County, Maryland, and later moved to Prince George's County. I went to college in the area, but I didn't study anything related to information technology. I got a degree in communications, and I credit that with a lot of my success in IT. I learned how to bridge the gap between technology and people.

Eventually, I picked up a job supporting a service desk at a federal agency after working in construction for several years. I had to learn on the fly how to support staff with technology problems, and I just fell in love with helping people in that way. At that point, I knew I wanted to focus on this work, so I went after a variety of IT certifications to build up my skillset.

How has your Library career evolved?

I've now been at the Library for just over eight years. I was a contractor for most of that time, first heading up the service desk of the Congressional Research Service, then leading the Copyright Office's service desk for several years. Its staff helps public users navigate the office's online processing systems.

Over the past year, however, I've been working as a Library employee. I manage technicians and program strategy in end-user computing, which means I lead the team that supports operations and maintenance of the Library's workstations and other technical devices. Our section is also responsible for Library laptops and iPhones; Webex; and the bring-your-own-device program, which allows staff to access work email and documents on approved personal devices. It's really in our division's name: End User Services. Any technical tool staff members might use in their work – wherever they're conducting it – we're ultimately responsible for.

I think I've been able to take on my new role because of my background leading multiple service desks, especially the public-facing work I did with Copyright. That experience taught me a lot about problem-solving, which has been especially useful in the work I've done recently with the Library's laptop deployment program during expanded telework.

How have the pandemic workplace changes affected your staff?

I've only just started teleworking myself. Our section previously had

one of the few teams remaining on-site. For the first several weeks of expanded telework, we set up and deployed laptops for staff. It's definitely been fast-paced and unprecedented. But I benefited from working over the last year on the Windows 10 migration for Library computers. It gave me experience developing a wide-scale plan, testing that plan and implementing it across our users. We'd also been working toward a regular workstation refresh for staff and testing new tools for mobile work and digital collaboration.

That's meant that, in many ways, we've been getting the Library ready for something like the current situation for some time. Obviously, no one predicted the pandemic, but even before expanded telework, we were taking major steps to modernize and mobilize all our equipment. My whole team is now working hard to continue to be there for the staff that need us and empower telework as much as we can for everyone.

What is something not many of your co-workers know about you?

I love gardening. I grow micro-greens in my basement, which is a pretty useful and surprisingly inexpensive hobby. Also, when the Woodrow Wilson Bridge was undergoing construction back in 2006, I encouraged my wife to submit her dad's name to a contest to detonate part of the bridge. At the time, he had a really terrible commute over that bridge every day. He won and took my wife along with him to set off the explosion. Our family was even interviewed by NBC News! ■

HAVING TECHNICAL ISSUES?

It is important to report any technical issues you experience to the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO). The OCIO service desk is staffed around the clock with technicians ready to help. Contact ocioservicedesk@loc.gov or (202) 707-7727.

OCIO has developed fact sheets and frequently asked questions to help teleworkers accomplish their work. They are available on the Library's public-facing web page (<https://go.usa.gov/xdTVQ>) in the technology resources section.

App Opens Digital Treasures to Mobile Users

To mark the 220th anniversary of the Library's founding – celebrated on April 24 – the Library released a new collections app, putting the institution's digital collections in the hands of users everywhere.

Named LOC Collections, the app offers an easy, accessible way to search and explore the Library's growing digital collections. It also allows users to curate personal galleries of items in the Library's collections for their own reference and for sharing with others. Items currently featured on the app include audio recordings, books, videos, manuscripts, maps, newspapers, notated music, periodicals, photos, prints and drawings.

"The Library of Congress collection can now fit in your pocket," said Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden. "It's been our goal to throw open our treasure chest and help every American connect to the Library of Congress. The LOC Collections app is a uniquely personal, easy new way to explore the nation's library."

Users can find the app for iPhone and iPad on the Library's website (<https://go.usa.gov/xvEfC>) or through the iTunes store. An Android version of the app is slated for release later this year.

"The LOC Collections app encourages users to explore over a

million maps, photographs, films, books, manuscripts and more in the Library of Congress' rich collections," said Michelle Light, director of special collections. "We hope people of all ages will dive in to discover items that surprise, teach, entertain or satisfy curiosity."

LOC Collections was conceived and created by the Library's design and development team in the Office of the Chief Information Officer. Usability testing with patrons helped shape the app before its release, and additional functionality and content is currently under development. ■

CRS, CONTINUED FROM 1

and 282 updates. A new COVID-19 resources page also launched, containing links to more than 100 CRS products. In addition, the organization has held more than a dozen webinars, including two sessions related to COVID-19.

"I deeply appreciate the dedication and hard work of CRS staff who have made it possible for the service to support Congress on this scale and so quickly. It is truly impressive," said Mazanec.

CRS has prioritized maintaining an open line of communication with Congress during the pandemic. In the first week of telework, Mazanec emailed all congressional staff to share information about CRS' COVID-19 resources, as well as to inform them that CRS remains prepared to assist them with the full range of legislative, oversight and representational issues.

Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, research staff are providing Congress with not just the most up-to-date information about COVID-19, but also a wide range of research and analysis related to other policy issues of congressional interest. And CRS'

librarians and information professionals continue to research a variety of topics and questions and staff reference desks virtually.

"Across the service, CRS staff have continued to provide exceptional support to Congress and ensured a smooth transition to a largely virtual operation," said Mazanec.

CRS staff have also been finding ways to maintain social and professional connections and support one another. CRS' communications team continues to distribute the weekly CRS newsletter, the Tuesday Morning Update, which contains internal policy updates, tips for adjusting to telework and other staff news – as well as a popular pet-of-the-week feature, which even before the pandemic helped to foster conversation and connection among staff.

CRS' Knowledge Management Section, part of the Knowledge Services Group, recently gave a presentation to staff on ways in which the SharePoint platform can be used to increase efficiency in collaboration. And staff are arranging virtual coffees, lunches and happy hours with their colleagues to check in, provide support and offer advice. Many trade book and

movie recommendations.

Sheryl Rivett, a CRS communications specialist, developed COVID-19 telework tip sheets for staff and managers. "When we move to full-time virtual work – and we are more isolated because of a pandemic – it's really important that we find ways to connect," she advised. Of virtual team meetings and coffees, she said, "Both help us to maintain our sense of connection, while supporting each other during this unusual time."

The COVID-19 pandemic has, undoubtedly, quickly transformed work across the Library. As it has done so, CRS managers have communicated with Library leaders and congressional stakeholders to develop guidance and recommendations and to adjust operations to meet the evolving situation.

Mazanec said she welcomes and encourages feedback on the service's response to COVID-19 and has high praise for CRS staff, who have upheld the organization's mission to serve Congress even under difficult circumstances. "I am incredibly proud to be a part of this organization," she said. ■